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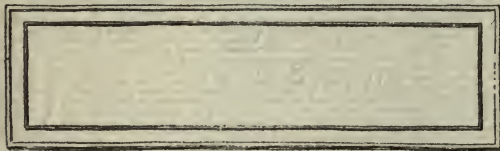
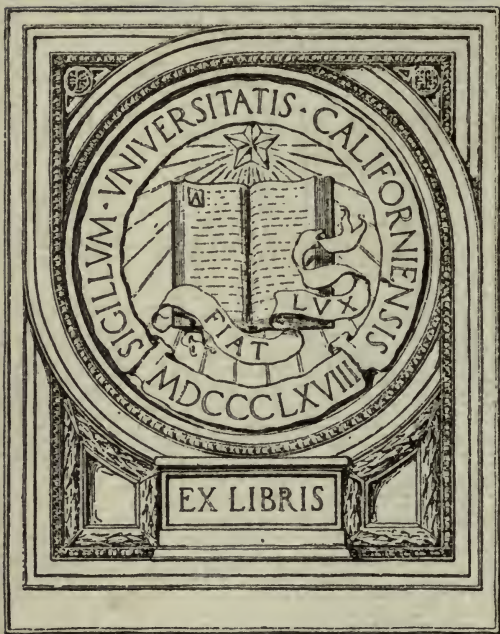
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AN ENGLISHMAN'S
FAREWELL
TO HIS CHURCH.

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**AN
ENGLISHMAN'S FAREWELL
TO HIS CHURCH**

AN ENGLISHMAN'S
FAREWELL
TO HIS CHURCH

THE
CHURCH OF
ENGLAND

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AMERICAN

AN
ENGLISHMAN'S FAREWELL
TO HIS CHURCH

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed."

Lycidas.

I

NOT with impatience or enmity have I
come to this little church to take leave
of you, my Mother, but with sorrow and with
pain.

In the dim light of the chancel the painted
windows, the candles still burning on the
altar, the pale flowers beside the crucifix, the
rail at which I have so often kneeled with
wistful thoughts of those I love, both in this
world and the next,—these things, and the
dark rafters of the roof, the shadowy screen,
even the fragrance of the incense still hang-
ing in the quiet air, seem to me now more

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beautiful and precious than ever yet I thought them to be.

Nevertheless I have made my last communion. I have come only to take farewell of you. And though my heart is sad, yet is my mind decided.

As I move slowly and reverently out of your cool shadows and come to the low-roofed porch with its arched picture of the outer world—sunlight, green grass, and ancient graves—I wonder to myself if you ever think of those who would love you if you would let them, and who are sorrowful because you stretch no hand to keep them.

For a moment, while I stand in this ancient porch, my back to the dark and deserted church, my face to a bright world which is full of life and death, there come to me memories of my communions which have culminated at last in this my sad communion of farewell.

I remember how I would kneel at your altar as a boy, in darkness of soul, and with shame at my heart, imploring God for

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strength to overcome my sins. (How I could weep over that poor boy now !) I remember, too, how tortured I was in my mind to know whether I had any right to approach your holy altar, with a heart so dark and a will so weak. And I remember how I came gradually to abandon those vain efforts to hold communion with God, feeling that the struggle to be Christlike was impossible and that God did not answer when I called to Him.

But I was born in the Church, and the sweet haunting of your tender most-familiar words followed me into the world ; and always the call of your bell woke into life the deepest memories of my childhood.

Then, with my moral character strengthened by manhood, and things clearer to me in the light of a greater intelligence, I came back to you, and could have wept as I knelt once more at your altar and received your Bread and Wine with the cry on my lips — Not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences.

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Then, presently, came intellectual doubts, disturbing me as sinful thoughts had before tortured me, and once again, after a struggle, a hard and a bitter struggle, deciding that I could not be a hypocrite, that I could not be false to my conscience, I abandoned my communions. But with greater knowledge, still haunted by your tenderness, I began to feel that it was possible to hold, without assenting to the letter, the spiritual significance of your creeds; and becoming what some people call a modernist, and because I still felt you to be my Mother, I returned to your altar, worshipping God and seeking with what earnestness I had the Light of the World.

And now I have decided, or, as I dare to think it, God has decided for me, that I can no longer worship at your altar, nor at that altar seek any longer the Light of the World. I have made my last communion; I am taking my farewell of you. And now I am praying in this porch, through which how many babes have been brought to your font, and how many Dead have passed to their burying,

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that in the greater day to which as all men now feel the divine Spirit is hurrying us, you may be found calling to your altar those who would love you now if now you loved truth more than you fear change.

I am leaving you, my Mother, because I feel you to be dishonest. I am leaving you because I feel your dishonesty to be a wall of stone between the heart of the world and the heart of the Christ. And I am leaving you because I want to live my brief earthly life without unsatisfying compromises and distracting adjustments, my whole spirit given quietly and gladly to the love of God.

II

MEN are leaving you because you have nothing to give them. You profess to give more than all the world can give them—more than nature, literature, art, science, travel, and creative work can give them—but in truth you give them nothing.

They find that they can live their lives as well without you as with you.

If you could give them what you profess to give them, then would this earth be like heaven, for you profess to give them the love of God.

To love God is to possess the peace which passes understanding, and to possess this great peace of God is to be like the angels.

How many who come to your services possess this peace of God? How many, do you think, of all those who still kneel at your altar really and truly believe in God?

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They believe, or they try to believe, that those things which you tell them about God are true ; but this is not to believe in God. To believe in God, really to believe in Him, to *know* that He is in very truth our Father, this is to have neither sorrow nor care ; it is to breathe the shining air of ecstasy, it is to have no fear and to dread no evil, it is to give out such love as changes the souls of men, it is to be a saint.

You do not make saints.

The world sees no difference in those who are still faithful to your altar. If there is any difference, it is that your men and women are sadder and more weary than the men and women who seek happiness in the world. Sometimes they are baser and meaner and more trivial. Very often they are ignorant, uninquiring, superstitious, and intolerant. But they are not saints.

Here and there in the company of those who are still faithful to your altar, some gracious woman is to be found whose life of devotion to the poor and lowly, the suffering

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and the sad, is like the beauty of Christ: or some priest may be found in the miseries and deprivations of dark neighbourhoods, whose soul is like the lovely soul of St. Francis. But these are lost in the midst of the many whose light does not shine before men.

Why is it that you do not make saints? Why is it that you do not attract the multitudes? How is it that you, who profess to give all, give nothing?

I think it is because you are dishonest. And by this I mean that while you still profess your power to give all, in your heart of hearts you know that you have lost the power to give anything. You do not believe what you say; neither do you practise what you preach. You believe that in ages gone by those who stood in your place at the altar had everything to give, and gave it to a faithful world which was transformed by the gift; and you think that if you are faithful to the old tradition, you are doing all that God and Man can require of you. But you yourself must have something to give.

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And you can have nothing to give until you are honest in your mind, until your heart is overflowing with the authentic love of God, and until your soul has felt the embrace of the living Spirit.

You are not true. Now, in the world which neglects you, pays no heed to you, goes its own way to eternity, and does not even trouble to attack or to mock you, so indifferent is it to your existence—in this world there is perhaps no great hunger and thirst after truth, but there is an instinctive, ever-increasing sense of the value of truth. And by nothing more notable is the modern world distinguished than by this instinctive sense of the value of truth.

It comes, I think, from the mechanical activity of science. Men see on every side of them the wonderful works of the inventor and the engineer, and know that all their manifold achievements are the fruits of exact thinking and an absolute devotion to truth. They know that a wheel to run smoothly must not be "out of the true." They know

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that there are laws of nature which can neither be broken nor ignored without disaster. And they know that anything which professes to be what it is not, comes to an end.

Strangely does the work of the man who hungers and thirsts after truth penetrate into the mass of the unthinking multitude. The most unlettered peasant in England, who has never heard the names of Copernicus and Ptolemy, and who would even be puzzled to point out the constellation of the Great Bear, no longer believes that this world is flat. And the least inquiring artisan in the towns, who has not turned a single page in *The Golden Bough*, no longer believes in magic. The whole world of toiling men, by some curious operation of the Time Spirit, marches abreast of the foremost pioneers.

They have ceased, almost without knowledge of it, to believe what their fathers believed before them. They know, without conscious realization, that the world in which they live is a world different from the world

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in which their fathers struggled for existence. And they march onward, conquering nature, earning daily bread, and getting what good they can out of this hard world, in the faith that whatever Reality may lie behind the vast Appearance it will one day be discovered.

Among those things which they have ceased to believe is the faith of their fathers as to the origin of man's life on this planet; and that ancient faith is the very foundation of all you are still calling upon these marching multitudes to believe.

III

YOU may not believe any longer that man was born in a state of perfection. You may not believe any longer that by the wilful and deliberate act of man sin came into this world. You may, on the other hand, believe with all the conviction of men of science that from the lowliest origins, in dark immemorial ages of chaos, life has forced its way upward to the stature of self-conscious man. And because you have so honestly thrown over the Mosaic cosmogony, and so honestly accepted this theory of modern science concerning evolution, you may think that surely you have done enough to bring the religion of Christ into harmony with modern thought.

But you must be more honest still.

There is another sacrifice for you to make, the greatest and the severest of all; and unless you make it, men will not listen to

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you. For until you make it, all that which you profess to have accepted at the hands of science is not truly accepted : it is indeed in your hands, but you are juggling with it, you are trying to make it what it is not.

This sacrifice which you must make to truth, if you would have men believe in you, is the sacrifice of that doctrine which would seem to lie at the very root of all your teaching, the doctrine of the atonement.

For men who march with the Time Spirit pay no heed to the compromises and adjustments, the hair-splittings and the quibbles of your theologians. They do not even inquire into this doctrine of the atonement. It has simply ceased to have any interest for them. It is no more a part of their life than astrology or alchemy. Theologians may explain and adjust; but men go forward, knowing that the thing is not true.

And it is not true. It cannot be true. And you yourself must know, if you truly believe in the theory of evolution, that it is definitely untrue.

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Why, then, do you still implore the world to come to your altar where you stand with this untruth in your heart, this untruth in your documents, this untruth in all your litanies and hymns? How can you think that men will come? Why should they come to you any more than they should go to the astrologer or the alchemist? What is the value of an untruth to a world whose safety from destruction lies in a constant attention to the facts of the universe?

And do you not feel in your own soul the paralysis of this untruth? Is it not because of this dishonesty in your own hearts that you have nothing to give men when they come to you? Examine that heart. Why is it so cold? Why has it lost the music and the gladness of the saints? Why does it seem to you at times as if God had veiled His face? Why is it that your heart is so little different from the hearts of other men?

Listen and pay heed to these words: *Know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. The*

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house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Truth is one of the three supremacies in human life. It is, with Love and with Goodness, the sovereign power in the moral world. And no man can be really moral who has not truth in his soul.

You tell men that Christ is a sacrifice for their sins. If they believed that, if they could believe it, do you not suppose that they would run and fall gladly at your altar, the whole world in tears at the foot of the Cross? But they cannot believe it. They can no more believe that Christ is a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world than they can believe that this earth is flat or that there is virtue in the incantations of an African magician.

And you yourself cannot believe it, if you believe that man has evolved from primeval chaos.

IV

LET me tell you what men no longer believe.

We no longer believe that man was born in a state of perfection and innocence.

We no longer believe that God has ever turned away His face from creation.

We no longer believe that Christ was born of a virgin.

We no longer believe in miracles.

We no longer believe that the death of Christ upon the Cross was necessary to salvation.

We no longer believe in the Resurrection of the Body.

And we no longer believe that you have anything to give us.

If men no longer believe in these seven things, how can you think that they will come to your altar?

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And if you no longer believe in them as your fathers believed in them, how can you think that from such teachings should come saints of God?

Is it not a choice for you between losing the world, letting the world go on without you, remaining heart-broken and sad at your deserted altar, a choice between this and following the truth wherever it shall lead you?

Have you forgotten that Christ said, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life?* Have you forgotten that He also said, *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly?*

Is it the world which has refused to follow Christ, or is it you who have forsaken Him and fled?

V

We no longer believe that man was born in a state of perfection and innocence.

THE whole spirit of modern thought has been changed by the doctrine of evolution. Life is transformed by it. It necessitates a revision of all our judgments. It is the second greatest event in the history of the human race. And not even yet has the world come to a full understanding of its implications.

But enough is already accomplished to shatter for ever the basis of orthodox faith. Man, who came from the dust, could never have sinned himself out of the providence of God. Sin itself becomes a different thing in the light of this immense discovery. The sin of one age was the necessity and the virtue of another. Man did not fall from a

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condition of goodness into a state of evil ; he rose from a non-moral condition into a moral state ; and he made his own morals as he went along. He has risen from a condition in which selfishness was a necessity of his existence, into a state in which self-sacrifice is felt by the least of men to be the highest height of conduct. He came into the world naked and ignorant ; the world was not a garden but a wilderness ; and no angels came and ministered to him.

Moved by the same force which quickened the slime whence all terrestrial existence took at the first its myriad forms, man for unnumbered years has been ever a fighter and ever a marcher ; he has fought and he has marched, conquering nature, increasing his knowledge, growing more beautiful, finding his way more certainly across the world, and ever standing more upright and with surer calm in the face of mystery.

There have been times when it seemed that he looked back, when it seemed that a halt had been called, when it seemed even

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that there would be a relapse into barbarism and superstition, bringing all to nought ; but the stream has steadied itself and gone forward again—forward always to the light.

Man did not invent sin. There is only one sin, and always there has been only this one sin, the sin which is against the light. When man does a thing which he knows to be a base thing, then he sins ; and, also, when man says he believes what he does not believe, then also does he sin. All other actions and thoughts and words which we call sins are relapses of human nature to its past. In ignorance men do the things (or think the thoughts) which their ancestors in remote ages did without sense of sin ; and in weakness and in blindness men fall away from the main advance of humanity because they cannot see clearly the light which calls them. But the main army, carrying its sinners along with it, goes on, still conquering the world, still growing in goodness, and still conscious of the light ahead.

To say that God ever turned His face away

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from the sublime progress of His creature is to say what cannot be true. And if God never turned His face away from His creature, then, to say that God required the death of Jesus to forgive the sins of this creature, is to say what is meaningless.

There has been no descent of man; from the first and up to this hour there has been an ascent of man, an ascent towards truth, goodness, and beauty.

VI

We no longer believe that God has ever turned away His face from creation.

YOUR own doctrine of the immanence of God is against such a theory. And from its first pages down to the present hour history bears witness to the continuing presence of the Creator with His creation.

Again and again in the long, difficult, and glorious progress of humanity, that mysterious force which we call *life*, and which as it now seems to men could only have come from outside the blazing nebula, again and again has this mysterious force flamed up in the case of individual men and been to the rest of mortality like a pillar of fire. Moses was such a man, a man perhaps greater for his period than any who has come after; and Plato was such a man, and Buddha, and

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Confucius, and Isaiah, and Saint Paul, and Mohammed, and Shakespeare, and Luther, and Kant, and Darwin, and many more.

Because of these men, humanity has taken heart upon its long march, and has gone forward more confidently and with a stronger hope, believing that light is ahead.

Evolution, which cannot account for truth, beauty, and goodness, cannot account for these men. They came into the world a hundred years, sometimes a thousand years, before their time. They are like the voice of God. They speak with an authority unknown among men. Their lives continue after their death. And men, looking back through time, see them like gods among the struggling swarms of mortality.

Whence came these men if not from God ?

And if from God, His messengers and agents, how shall we say that God has ever turned His face from creation ?

Dare you solemnly declare in the presence of men that you believe there was an hour in the history of the world when the unchanging,

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all-powerful, fore-knowing, and eternal Spirit, like a child at a game, was sorry that He had made man?

Do you truly and earnestly believe that God ever grew angry with men?—or that men ever went so far out of the road of moral progress that some mysterious act of blood-sacrifice was necessary to renew the mercies of the Creator?

But if you do not believe this how can you speak of Christ as the Redeemer? as the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world?

How can you speak such dreadful words if they do not mean the very breath of truth to your existence?

It is in this very Christ men see the chief witness to their faith that God is in us, with us, and above us. They do not see Christ as their Redeemer, but as the Light of the World. They do not see Him as a lamb slain for their sins before the foundations of the world; but as something greater, grander, and more sublime, as the Way, the Truth,

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and the Life. They do not cry to Him that He will wash their garments in His blood, but gazing upon Him seek to become like Him. He is for them the incarnation of divine love : He is, as it were, the character of God made man : He is, as it were, the personality of God clothed in human flesh. Men reverence Him as none other that ever lived has been revered. They love Him as it is impossible to love any other. And feeling in themselves this instinct of reverence and this instinct of love, endeavouring to follow Him and to become like Him, they say as they say of no other, Truly this was the Son of God.

But since God never turned away His face from creation, men can no longer kneel at that altar where the prayer is made : "Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us."

It is faith in the Love of God which destroys faith in such a Christ.

VII

We no longer believe that Christ was born of a Virgin.

WHILE you sit disputing with those who tell you that such a legend as this is to be found in all the mythologies of ancient days, explaining to them that those legends were but prophecies and foreshadowings of the one true Virgin Birth, the great world, with whom your business lies, goes on its way heedless of you and heedless of those who dispute with you.

The world is sure that miracles like this never occurred. It is so sure, that the matter has no interest for it. It could no more argue with you on this matter than it could argue with those who still maintain the world to be flat; but all your arguments would fail to shake its conviction that Christ was born as

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all the sons of men have been born from the beginning of time down to this hour.

You must learn to respect these instincts of humanity, which have played so great a part in the history of the race. There is among men, even among the least instructed and the least disciplined, an almost unerring instinct for what is true. And a man cannot violate these instincts, suffering himself to be persuaded to say that he believes what he does not believe, without grave harm to his soul. By these instincts, and by these instincts alone, men guide the greater part of their lives across the world, and by these instincts, and by these instincts alone, free nations decide how they will act in the hour of crisis. Instinct is to the spirit what reason is to the mind. And it is conscience in action.

It is their instinct which has told the vast masses of mankind that Christ was not born of a Virgin. They *feel* that this doctrine is untrue. And no casuist in the world can *argue* a man into believing what he feels is not true.

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You may summon to your side the biologist who will tell mankind that the theory of a virgin birth is not impossible: you may explain that from the beginning of time there have been foreshadowings of this divine event: you may marshal the names of great men in every nation and in every age who have humbly and gratefully accepted this doctrine; but the world will continue on its way, neither pausing to listen nor turning for a moment to shake its head. For this doctrine has ceased to be true for the world of living men.

And it is with this great world that your business lies.

Have you considered that Christ Himself made no claim to a Virgin Birth?

Have you reflected that neither in Mark nor John is mention made of this most strange and magical event?

Are you quite certain that it is urgent and necessary for men to say before God, as a solemn fact of their souls, that they believe Christ to be born of a Virgin?

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It is a great sin in you, if you are not sure of it, to put that stumbling-block in the way of men. And, are you very sure of it? Do you faithfully and most truly believe that Christ was born out of the order of nature? Is it to you as certain and as absolute as the facts by which you guide your daily life? More: is it necessary to your faith in Christ and obedience to His teaching? Could the spirit of God enter into a man by no other means?

Men say to me that the wonder and the beauty of Christ would be destroyed for them if they believed this doctrine of the Virgin Birth. They could see no grandeur in His martyrdom if they thought that He came into the world thus sinless and thus unthinkably different from ourselves. And you cannot persuade them to believe that One so born was nevertheless in all points of His human nature like unto themselves. Language breaks in such an attempt; it becomes meaningless.

Since men no longer believe that Christ

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was born of a Virgin, and since it is not necessary to the worship and love of Christ that they should believe it, and since Christ Himself made no claim to so miraculous an origin, why do you still insist that it is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian Faith?

Is it more essential to the salvation of the world that you should safeguard the traditions of men born in ages of ignorance and superstition, or that you should be faithful to the Time Spirit which has urged mankind away from this belief?

Tell me, how would you answer a man who, replying to your plea that this doctrine is in your tradition and in your documents, challenged you as a proof of your right to speak in the name of Christ, and, as a proof of your absolute faith in your documents, to give the signs of faith mentioned in Mark's gospel.

It is written: *In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they*

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shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Is it not true, when those whom you love are sick that you send for a physician?

If you are thus honest with yourself, why are you not also honest with the souls of other men?

In the name of Christ you dare not drink strychnine nor take an adder into your hand. Why, then, in His name should you ask men to believe that which no man can believe without doing violence to his soul?

VIII

We no longer believe in miracles.

YOU know that all the religions of the world are full of miracles. In other religions you call them myths and legends. In your own, you call them historical events. And for some reason which is not plain to other men you appear to think that faith in miracles is necessary to faith in the religion of Christ.

This question of miracle does indeed lie at the very heart of your religion. For your religion is made up from beginning to end of things contrary to man's experience. You begin with a God Whose wrath and indignation can be most justly provoked against us, and Who at one time repented of having

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made mankind. You then proceed to a Second Person of the same God miraculously born into this evil world of men, Who to prove His authority as God performed miracles, some of them great and noble, others of them neither great nor noble. You then follow this miraculous Being to the Cross, where He dies calling in vain to God ; and you proclaim His death a blood-offering for the sins of men. And then to crown all, you show us this same miraculous Being not only risen from the dead with the marks and scars of His sufferings upon His body, but actually ascending with that body into the clouds.

And to those who cannot believe any of these things, who can no more believe them than they can believe the fables of Homer or the fables of India, Japan, and Arabia, you make answer that God Who is omnipotent can either break the laws of nature or out of the laws of nature produce that which seems to ignorant man a transcendence of nature.

But do you accept the legends in the

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Talmud and the Koran? Do your missionaries when they go to Japan accept the legends of Shintoism, or, when they go to India, the miracles of Hinduism? Is it not true that outside your own religion you do not believe in miracles? And is it not also true that even in your own religion you only believe those miracles which are long past?

It is told of Father Ignatius that he raised three people from the dead. Do you believe it? He was a Christian. He is said to have performed his miracles in the Name of Christ, and witnesses of these miracles are said to exist. But do you believe in them? Do you really believe that he raised people from the dead?

Just as you do not believe in these miracles—your soul tells you that you *cannot* believe in them—so do other men disbelieve in the miracles of the Christian religion.

See what it is in which you ask men to believe.

Instead of continuity and law, you ask them to believe in caprice and interposition.

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Above all other things you ask them to believe in a God Who interferes. You not only think that God miraculously interfered in the past, but you teach that He miraculously interferes now. You yourself, when you are ill, send for a doctor, or, when your affairs are in trouble, send for a solicitor, or, when you have children, insure your life to provide for them after your death; but you teach men that God is watching over them, that He interferes to save them, and that He only waits to be called upon by the heart of faith to act in our behalf.

But you know that men who pray till the sweat stands upon their foreheads see those who are dearer to them than life dying in a great agony. And you know, too, that a man who only prayed to God in such a case, and who did not send with all speed for doctor and surgeon, would be guilty of a crime.

Sometimes you think you have found a case in which God has interfered, and you set it against all your long and bitter experience, cherishing it almost as you cherish

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your traditions, till the newness wears away, and once more the chills of infidelity creep coldly round your heart. But do you not see that if God did interfere *once*, by all the laws which the soul of man can understand, by all the principles of justice which man must find in a Being worthy of his worship, God would have to interfere *always*? And so would perish that which lifts man up and makes him feel the hope of heaven is not a dream, his power to choose between right and wrong, between truth and untruth, his Freedom and his Will.

God has never interfered in this way. God has been always in us, with us, and above us, and when our wills are given to Him and our hearts are like the hearts of children, we may do many and great works within the laws of nature. But God is not a law-breaker. God has never changed His mind, nor, changing His mind again, has interfered with violence and with miracle. He is the same Yesterday, To-Day, and For Ever. His laws endure. His purposes stand fast.

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And men who are free rejoice to know that in dealing with this God they deal with One Whose justice is absolute and Whose truth is everlasting.

Men do not believe in miracles because miracles do not happen. They do not believe that miracles occurred in the past or that miracles will happen in the future. They believe that the reign of law which they now observe and from which they are powerless to break free, existed from the beginning of time and will exist till the end of time.

It is not a case of setting up their judgments against your judgment. It is a case of impossibility. They *cannot* believe in miracles. They cannot believe in them any more than you can believe in the miracles of Odin or Father Ignatius. It is out of their power to believe in them. The Time Spirit has carried them far away from that age in which it was possible for any man of honour and integrity to say from his soul, I believe in miracles.

IX

We no longer believe that the death of Christ upon the Cross was necessary to salvation.

BUT you present Christ to humanity in no other way.

From the beginning to the end of all your services, Christ is presented as the sacrifice for our sins and as our Advocate with the Father.

But is it possible for human brain to conceive of a God Who requires the pleading of an Advocate to be merciful, or Whose mind could be changed by such pleading? Is such a God, were human brain truthfully able to conceive of Him, a God Whom men could *love*? Could they even respect Him?

But your tradition will not let you free. On your altar Jesus is still sacrificed, the Lamb is for ever slain, and those who yet

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cling to you creep upon their knees to drink His Blood and to eat His Flesh, that their sins may be forgiven. It is impossible, so it would seem, for you and for them to conceive of Christ in any other way. If He did not come into the world to be offered as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, why did He come?

And yet, if from the first God has been with us, in us, and above us, if from the first God has ever loved His children and has never turned His face away from them, why should a sacrifice, an oblation, a satisfaction be necessary?

If it be true that, So God loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life: if this be true, is it not certain that Christ came rather to tell men the Will of God than to die in order that He might bring the averted face of God round to this world again?

Is it easier to believe in Christ as a blood-

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offering, or as the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

And how can it be possible for the death of Christ to atone for our sins?

There is only one forgiveness of sins, the repentance of the sinner and the reunion of his will with the Will of God. If he does not repent, his sins remain with him. But if he repent and if his will, by his repentance, be restored to union with the Will of God, then is he forgiven; and with that forgiveness the death of Christ has no part. In this manner God forgave men before Jesus came into the world, and still forgives them in all the religions of the world, and still forgives them in the Christian religion. Did not Jesus Himself teach that in this way the sins of men are forgiven?

The Prodigal said, I will arise and go to my father; and his father saw him while he was a great way off; and the father ran to meet him, and the son said, I have sinned—and the love of the father restored him to his home.

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Could you find beauty in this parable if the father had averted his face, and if one had come to the son and said to him, Before your father can forgive you, you must find a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for your sin?

Has not Christ Himself declared to men that there are only two great commandments, love of God, and love of our fellow-men? And has He not foretold to us, in His parables of the judgment, that love of our fellow-men is the way of union and lack of that love the way to separation? In which of His parables, and where in all His teaching, does He tell men that they must plead His death as a sacrifice for their sins?

Are you not, in your doctrine of the atonement, more faithful to the traditions of men than to the teaching of Christ?

We do not love Christ because He died upon the Cross. We love Him because of His character. It is not any act or deed of Christ which draws the whole world to

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Him, but the divine grace and the divine beauty of His spirit. He drew men to Him by this same force while He was yet alive. And in all ages those who have denied your doctrines have acknowledged this universal attraction of Christ's character. Have no fear. Till the end of time men will love Him, and for ever He will lead them to the Kingdom of God.

The Christ Whom men love is the Christ of the parables, the Christ of the Mount of Olives, the Christ Who took a little child and set him in the midst of his disciples, the Christ Who wept over Jerusalem, the Christ Who hid His face from the accused woman and wrote with His finger in the dust, the Christ Who comforted the sorrowful, con-sorted with sinners, and Who rebuked the Scribes and the Pharisees.

What have these things to do with His martyrdom?

The Christ Whom men love is the Christ Who said that charity should be secret and modest, that we must forgive our enemies,

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that we must love God and love our fellow-men, that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, that we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, that we must be merciful, that we must be pure in heart, that we must be peacemakers, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like a lily of the field, that we are not to judge our fellow-men, that to many who shall say to Him, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name . . . and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" He will answer and say, "I never knew you," that whosoever shall do the will of His Father which is in heaven the same is His brother, and sister, and mother, that whoso shall receive one little child in His name receives Christ Himself, and that God is our Father.

What have those great sayings to do with His death upon the Cross?

Christ died, as other men have died, from Socrates to Galileo, because of the truth within His soul. And men love Him, not for the courage of His martyrdom, but be-

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cause they see in His life and doctrine man's
highest revelation of the beauty, the truth,
and the goodness of our Father Who is with
us, in us, and above us.

X

We no longer believe in the Resurrection of the Body.

IT is a mark of your weakness that you still hold this impossible doctrine. If you were strong you would have put it from you long ago. But because you are weak, because you dare not trust yourself alone, because you know that you have nothing to give men, you cling with gripping fingers to every fragment of your traditions, even to this.

How can you expect honest men to stand up and say "I believe in the resurrection of the body"?

See what it is you ask them to believe.

The body is what it is by reason of our atmosphere. Were the density of the atmosphere to be lightened, men would become

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tall as trees, and would spring over houses and take hills in their stride. Were it to become heavier, men would crawl painfully about the earth, squat of body, with broadened jaws, and with monstrous shoulders, scarcely able to move their hands.

And the body is a union of organs which exist only for this particular environment. The lungs must have air: the intestines must have food. You cannot believe that this body will exist in heaven, with its beating heart, its veins and arteries, its bladder and its liver, its lungs and its bowels. But if you do not believe this, why do you ask men to assert that they do believe it?

Is it because you feel that your religion depends for its authority upon the bodily resurrection of Christ?

But if the Spirit of Christ appeared to Saul and converted him into Paul the Apostle, may it not have been this same Spirit which appeared to the scattered

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disciples and convinced them also that Jesus was indeed the Christ?

What is the difference made by a bodily resurrection?

Was it the body of Christ men loved, and the body of Christ which brought light into the world? Was it not rather the Spirit of Christ, which was the Spirit of God, that men loved, and that brought Light into the world?—and is not the resurrection of that Spirit sufficient proof of our immortality?

Men cannot believe that the human body of Christ ascended beyond the atmosphere of this earth, or that their own bodies of corruption will be assembled on the last day, breaking the grave, and ascending into heaven. To ask them to believe these things is to ask them to believe both what is impossible and unnecessary.

You must know in your heart of hearts that such a belief is impossible. You only believe it is necessary because you dare not trust yourself to Christ alone.

You dare not say, as He Himself said very

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clearly, that only two things are necessary for eternal life—love of God, and love of our fellow-men. You refuse to follow Him in this. You think it must be necessary to add many other things to these necessities, which seem to you too simple to earn eternal life. And so you say it is necessary to salvation that men should believe in a Trinity, in a Virgin Birth, in a blood offering, and in a bodily resurrection. Christ Himself said none of these things.

But is it true that love of God and love of our fellow-men are so simple? Is it not true rather that these two things are the highest heights to which the soul of man can attain? And is it not possible that you are actually frustrating the whole purpose of Christ, and holding the human race in check, by interposing between these two essential ends of the human spirit dogmas of the impossible which distract and waste and drive away the souls of men?

When you have perceived that on these two great commandments hang all the Law

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and the prophets, you will trouble about nothing else.

Christ came into the world to win the world to this faith, that the Will of God might be done in earth as it is done in heaven. And not until men love God and love their fellow-men, can the Will of God be done in earth as it is in heaven.

It is here that the teaching of Christ transcends morality. You say that it is enough to hold certain creeds, to come to the altar, and to live morally. Christ says that all this is of no avail. He takes our poor human morality and makes it divine with love. He tells us that the Will of God can never be done in earth as it is in heaven till men love. And He shows us this love in His own life as something which is at variance with the spirit of the world. It is meek and lowly, it is long-suffering and patient, it is entirely unselfish, and it is without care for the future.

And must you not say, if you examine your own heart, that though the whole world

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came as a few now come to your altar, remaining in themselves and in the manner of their lives like those who now come, that still the Kingdom of Heaven would be afar off?

And can you not see that the only power able to change the heart of man and transfigure the dark and troubled face of human existence, is this wonderful Christ love—love of God and love of man?

XI

*We no longer believe that you have
anything to give us.*

THERE would be a greater effort to believe what you tell us is necessary to salvation, if you had anything to give men which is wonderful and divine. But men feel that you, like themselves, are in the dark concerning the mystery of existence, and that out of your own experience you can give them nothing which the moralists in all ages have not been able to give; they feel that you rely for the power you still exercise over a few upon the traditions of a past which is dead.

Can you not see how men must regard you, when, making the claim that you are the minister and steward of God's mysteries, claiming that you are a disciple of the Christ

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Who changed the world, and asserting that you are in direct succession of the Apostles, men like St. Paul, can you not see how men must regard you when they come and hear what you have to say?

You read to them from the Psalms of David, many of which are full of petty hate and violent anger. You read to them the legendary account of bloody battles between the Israelites and their enemies. And you ask them to kneel and pray with you, imploring God, for the sake of their only Mediator and Advocate, to forgive them their sins. And then you go into the pulpit and for a few minutes preach to them about a text in the Bible.

Do you not agree that men would find it insufferable to listen Sunday after Sunday to a reading of so great a masterpiece as *Hamlet*? But why, then, should you expect them to listen to the chroniclers of Israelitish legend? What good comes of it? What is its interest? Suppose Christ had sat upon the Mount of Olives reading from Kings or Chronicles. Or

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that, taking the little child upon His knee, He had repeated a psalm of David.

Men went to Christ in great flocks and multitudes because He did not speak like the Scribes and Pharisees, because He spoke as one having authority, above all because He had something to give them—something which lightened their burdens, gladdened their hearts, and strengthened their souls. They would not have gone to Him had He only been able to repeat the phrases of the temple.

Why is it that you have nothing to give men? How is it that your greatest preachers come and depart, leaving the world so little changed? Politicians effect changes, men of science effect changes, writers of books effect changes; but every year your lessening power grows less, and you change nothing.

I think you have nothing to give men because you have received nothing from God. You are like the priests of other religions, and like the philosophers of other schools. If you were filled with the Holy Spirit, men

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would feel that you were different from other men. You would be a light in the world. You would be like leaven and like salt. Because of you, the heart of the world would be changed, and the whole soul of the world would be moved.

But how can you be spiritually different from other men while you cling to an outworn tradition and make no effort to do the Will of a living God ?

Men see you so little touched by love of God that you are divided into warring sects, fighting over the disputed letter of a doubtful document, and in your divisions living in an inequality which is like the inequality of the industrial world. One man is so rich a follower of Christ that he drives his carriage and pays a curate to preach for him ; another is so threadbare and destitute that as he goes on his errands of mercy to the poor he is distracted by the burden of his debts. Do you imagine that men, seeing these things, can seriously take you for the Society of Jesus ?

Do you solemnly think that Christ Jesus

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came into the world to form any such Society as this?

We, who do not believe that He was God, who do not believe that He was born of a Virgin, and who do not believe that He was crucified for our sins, and do not believe that He rose bodily from the grave, cannot believe that He came into the world to form such a Society as this. But you, who believe all these tremendous things, how can you say that Christ came into the world to found your Church?

No more did Christ come to found the Inquisition than to found this distracted, privileged, unjust, and unequal Church.

His Spirit has ever been free of the Church which claimed to speak in His name. It has moved across the world and has penetrated all nations, in the lives of men and women who have lived as He lived and taught as He taught. The Spirit of Christ at this hour is pervading the whole body of Shintoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Men in India and Japan and China who still remain faithful to

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their own religions are being moved by the Spirit of Christ to love God and to love their fellow-men as their fathers before them never loved either God or Man. And in Europe, outside the walls of the great Churches, men and women are labouring with heart and soul to make life more beautiful and just, more noble and uplifting. These are they to whom it will be said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Do you not fear, you who declare that the Bread of Life is in your keeping, to hear spoken to you those other words, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat"?

Do you think that the great world can be fed by your mysteries of the altar, by your prayers and bewailings?

It is written: Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I

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delight to do Thy will, O my God : yea, Thy law is within my heart.

And Christ said, " My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Do you not perceive that the Light of the World is different from the light of philosophy, of morality, and of social respectability? It is a Light which changes everything, which transfigures everything. The man who follows the Light of the World is a man different from all men who follow other lights. He has no care for the future. He has no doubt in his heart. All men are his brothers, and all men who love God are his companions on the Way. He gives to the poor, he comforts the sorrowful, he helps the lame ; he walks with the blind, and with those who seek honours and riches he has no part. For him there is no glory of the world like unto the glory of God. All places are his altar, and at all hours he would fill the courts of God with praise. He has lost his earthly life, and has found his heavenly life. He loves with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his soul. There

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is for him only the one Reality. And though you drive him forth, and all the world should make a mock of him, still with that love in his heart would he have heaven for his company and death for his friend.

“Those who need much help, and can give none, are the ones we call *the wicked*. Those who could give much, but give little, we call *the good*. Those who try to give all they can, as they think that Christ would have them do, we call *cranks*.”

Only the man who gives all he can, because he loves God and because he trusts God, is worthy to be called a follower of Christ.

And only from such a man does the true spirit of Christ proceed. He has much to give, because he has given all and received that which is greater than all.

XII

IF you really believed in God you would be concerned with these things which I have written. But I know that you will put them by and be angry with them. They are addressed to you, but they will find their lodging in the hearts of those to whom faith in God is more real and more desperate than it is to you.

Yet before you put these things by, I would have you consider how much worse a thing it is than living without God to live misrepresenting God.

Suppose it to be really true that there is a God. Put from your mind all other thoughts and hold there for a moment this one great thought, the possibility that God really does exist. And when the immensity of this thought has filled your soul, think to yourself that some day you hope actually to

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stand in the Presence of this Everlasting Spirit.

Can you without uneasiness think of standing in the Presence at all? But can you without great dread of soul, shaking your whole spirit like a palsy, think of standing in that Eternal Presence as one who has presumed to speak in His name?

Can you declare quite honestly that you are unafraid?

Suppose—as Christ foretold of some—that He has never known you, that your prophecies and your mighty works have so misrepresented the truth of God that they are actually works of iniquity. Suppose that your sin is greater than all the sins of the flesh. Suppose you have driven men away from God.

Since it is possible that you may be numbered among those who thinking they serve God do in reality hinder the work of God, preventing His Will from being done in earth as it is in heaven, should you not pause before you put these words away from

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you, and consider well, with prayer and meditation, whether they are not the words of truth?—

Remembering that your work lies not with the traditions of the dead but with the souls of the living, and that the souls of these living, in great multitudes, are turning away from you, and that among the souls of all these living there is not one which is not dear to the heart of God.

If He has left man free to choose between right and wrong, has He not also left you free to choose between truth and untruth?

And if it can avail no man to say, Thus did I live because of the blood in my veins and the environment wherein I was born, how shall it avail you to say, Thus did I believe because so did my fathers believe before me?

Christ is the Light of the World. And since the World is a World in motion, a World that halts not, neither turns about, but moves ever farther from ignorance and ever nearer to knowledge, so must it be that

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the Light of the World burns ever brighter on the World's way.

Men see Him now no longer hanging in defeat upon the Cross, nor pleading His sufferings before the judgment bar of an angered God, but going ahead of their toil-worn ranks in grace and beauty, and in quiet confidence, going ahead of them, yet always with them, to that great end of all things, that fulfilment of all things, that sublimity and immortality of all things—the Will of God.

Out of the wreckage wrought by Godless war, war which all the Churches of the world have been powerless to bind, men will build up a better and a juster world, a world wherein it shall no longer be a mockery to pray, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

How shall you help in this great building of a new world if you believe what the world no longer believes, and if you still hold fast to traditions which for the rest of mankind have perished in the flames of a world that was not good?

XII

THROUGHOUT this farewell I have spoken of the Time Spirit. As I come to an end I wonder whether the day is not at hand when men will feel that this action of the Time Spirit is at once an explanation of evolution and a clue to the purposes of God.

For whatever it may be, certain is it that this force in the world is urging men ever away from the exhausted past and ever onwards to an unimaginable future. It will not let us stand. It will not let us be satisfied. It will not let us think that the world grows old. "All history," says a modern writer, "is and will continue to be a prelude." We feel that now and for ever on this earth the whole creation moves to some far-off divine event. And when we examine ourselves and try to discover how it is that we

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move and change and become, we are unable to say.

A man teaches a boy: the boy grows up either to know more or to know less than the man knows who taught him. But the boy carries with him, whence gathered he cannot tell, some power of instinct which carries him beyond the point reached by the man.

There is scarcely any power so great as that which we call suggestion. And yet, the child who is dosed with suggestion in all the formative years of his life, and who would grow up, we should say, almost the automaton of his teacher, grows up to think differently and to feel differently from that teacher. Something within him not himself enables him to carry the fortunes of humanity another day's march into the Unknown. Religion is taught to most of us by our mothers. Here the suggestion of teaching is fortified by almost the strongest and most sacred of human affections. And yet the child grows up to think of God in a way perhaps his mother never thought.

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"Give us the child," say the priests of the Latin Communion, "and the man will be ours to the end." But this has never been true, and it is less true in modern Europe than it has ever been.

Even among those priests who withstand change and who faithfully guard their traditions, the Time Spirit is at work. They may still say the Apostles' Creed, but they no longer say it as the Apostles said it. There is as great a difference between the priests of this generation and the priests of the last, as there was between the Deists of the eighteenth century and the inquisition of the dark ages. The tradition which is guarded now would hardly be recognized by those who fashioned it. And so I think that the day is coming for you, my Mother, when your altar will be served by priests who offer only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, while your courts are filled with anthems of delight sung with great gladness by those who have discovered that love is the one fulfilling of the law.

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For you belong to the world, and the race which has established you is a world race, with its flag in many lands and its language among all nations. And to you who have given back to the Orient your Western Christ will come back again in the future an Eastern Christ Who shall become a World Christ, and you will love this true Christ with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul. For, we needs must love the Highest when we see it.

The Time Spirit works among all nations and all peoples, but among some nations and some peoples more than among others, and in your nation most of all. Ever your children have been fearless seekers of the truth, ever have they been impatient of authority, ever have they trusted more than all others that instinct of the human spirit which is like the Spirit of God. And these children of yours are making the world.

Now they throw off the restraints of a Church which refuses to go forward with them; but to-morrow they will have built a

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new Church in many lands, and in a vision I see their children, with the children of many lands, bringing roses to the feet of Christ.

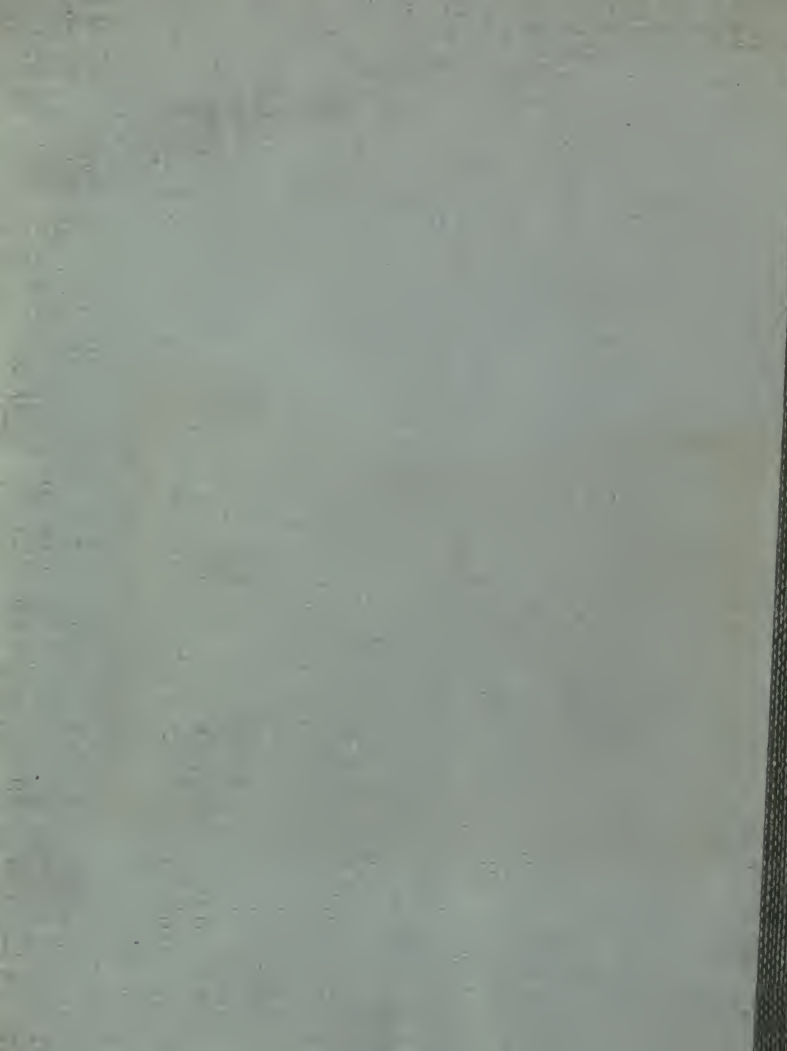
Turn away from the great Argument, knowing that there you will for evermore come out by the same door as in you went; turn away from the writings of the rabbi and the priest whose mouths are stopped with dust; turn away from the altar where in vain is offered a false and dishonouring sacrifice to the God of Love; and, turning away from these, and turning away also from the world, the flesh, and the devil, trust yourself to Love and Truth, and give heed with all your soul to the whispering of the Spirit of God in your own conscience, that Spirit which has ever gone with man, still goes, and will for ever go, on this great journeying of our life from Time to Eternity. Do you ask me what is left of Christianity if all which I say is false be taken from it? I will tell you. That is left which is the very heart of Christianity; that is left which a

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false Christianity obscures and darkens;
that is left which Christ sought with love
and warning to make more manifest, more
beautiful, more inspiring, more uplifting and
more decisive—the Reality of God.

THE END

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